



## **Design Review Working Group**

Date: Tuesday, April 21, 2020  
Time: 8:30am  
Location: Conducted via remote participation

### **Minutes**

1. Preamble to remote meetings and ground rules for online meetings.
2. Review minutes from 2/27/2020  
Minutes were approved with changes submitted by Wendy in advance of the call and Erin's request to remove the reference to the field visit, as the February meeting did not include a field visit.
3. Discussion on draft of Existing Conditions Memo.  
Harriman provided an overview of the Existing Conditions Memo. The memo will serve as the introduction to the final design guidelines after the planning process with the community has been completed. The memo patterns and concerns based on discussions with the working group and field visits.

Using "fuzzy" neighborhood boundaries based on discussions with the working group, Harriman created a number of maps to visualize data from the Assessor's database. The memo provides a review of these factors for the full town, as well as detailed information by neighborhood, identifying differences in median age built, density (by residential lot size and residential FAR), styles and typology using categorizations in the Assessor's databased), and historic districts. A separate section on zoning and permits outlines the primary dimensional requirements that need to be considered alongside the design guidelines. The team clarified that the guidelines will not result in a zoning amendment, and will instead serve to help developers

and architects think about what they can do to improve the compatibility of new construction with the surrounding neighborhood.

The working group provided feedback on a number of areas:

- Language of the project goals: Harriman will revise the first project goal to remove “ARB” and instead state that the guidelines will be in the “public interest” or “public benefit”.
- Neighborhood maps and boundaries: Harriman will revise the boundaries between Arlington Center and East Arlington and Arlington Heights by the water tower. Additional revisions will be made after future public workshops based on participant feedback. Working group members were requested to send photos or scans of marked up maps to Kelly so she can collect feedback and share with Harriman.
- Median home values: Harriman will review the median home value quoted on page 9 of the memo.
- Size of new construction vs. nationwide averages: the group discussed whether the size of new construction should be addressed, although it was decided that this is a complicated issue linked with land values and market demand, and that the scope of the project is focused on finding ways of encouraging the compatibility of new construction regardless of size.
- Home styles: Harriman will add a photo of a Dutch Colonial to the spread on page 20, with a note that the style falls under the category of “colonial” the Assessor’s database.
- Using photos of Arlington homes in the guidelines: Harriman will discuss with Erin and Kelly how to address using photos of Arlington homes in the Existing Conditions memo to make sure it doesn’t appear that we are placing a value judgement on a home’s appearance. No Arlington homes are used in the Visual Preference Survey.
- History of architecture of housing styles: Harriman will look at the scope to see if a brief chronological history can be added to the memo.

#### 4. Discussion on draft of Visual Preference Survey (VPS)

Kelly prefaced the discussion noting that the state is currently heading toward a surge of COVID-19 cases, so DPCD and Harriman are working to identify ways for the community to engage virtually in this project. The VPS will likely serve in lieu of the first workshop. DPCD will need assistance from the working group to promote the survey and achieve broad participation,

and if this is not achieved, will look at slowing down the process to ensure we get the input we need to move forward.

Harriman provided an overview of the draft VPS. The goals of the VPS are to provide insight into respondents' sensitivities and understanding residential design, as well as to educate respondents on a range of design possibilities. The first portion of the survey evaluates preference on single-family and two-family structures, using photos of primarily new construction and recently renovated homes. The second part of the survey dives into smaller design elements on homes, such as dormers, additions, and parking. A final section asks a series of open-ended questions about what people want to get out of design guidelines and what questions and concerns people have.

None of the photos used in the examples are from Arlington, although most are from the metro Boston area.

Harriman may also do a VPS at a future public workshop to understand how the perspective of those in the room varies compared to those who took the survey online.

The group discussed whether to add questions about landscaping, and decided to add an open-ended question to the last page to learn what people think basic requirements should be.

#### 5. Next steps.

DPCD will issue a press release announcing when the survey is live. At the present, there is a public workshop tentatively scheduled for the end of May, but the project schedule will depend on the course of the pandemic. In the meantime, Harriman is looking at creative ways to continue to engage residents in the project, including a do-it-yourself workshop.

The group discussed whether to add a cost comparison on materials and the environmental impact of materials as part of the Design Guidelines to demonstrate the difference between basic construction and the cost of following the guidelines. As this is beyond the scope of the project, and construction costs and materials are constantly changing, the recommendation was to focus on the design considerations and how to incorporate the design review process into an existing workflow.

Kelly will alert the Design Review Working Group when the VPS goes live and ask for their assistance in promoting the survey to other residents.

Working Group members will share maps with their feedback on neighborhood boundaries and any additional photos they'd like considered for the VPS or Existing Conditions Memo to Kelly.

Meeting ended at 9:40am.